

## APPARATUS AND METHODS FOR PROCESSING COMPOSITE COMPONENTS USING AN ELASTOMERIC CAUL

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### ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Apparatus and methods for processing composite components using an elastomeric caul are disclosed. In one embodiment, a method includes forming a prepreg material on a 10 non-planar portion of a lay-up mandrel, and providing an elastomeric caul over the prepreg material in an initial position such that a first portion of the elastomeric caul is proximate the prepreg material on the lay-up mandrel, and a second portion of the elastomeric caul adjacent the first portion is spaced apart from the prepreg material. Next, a pressure is reduced within a space disposed between the elastomeric caul and the lay-up mandrel proximate the non- 15 planar portion. Simultaneously with the reducing of the pressure with the space, the elastomeric caul is stretched into a second position such that the second portion of the elastomeric caul is drawn proximate to at least one of the prepreg material and the lay-up mandrel.

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- 17 -

BING-I-1061AP

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